

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Statement by

Susan Sclafani

Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education

on the

**Fiscal Year 2005 Request for
Vocational and Adult Education Programs**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to appear before you to discuss the President's fiscal year 2005 budget request for Vocational and Adult Education. The 2005 budget includes \$1.6 billion for secondary and technical education and adult education programs. It also outlines some fundamental changes we believe are necessary to ensure that these resources are used most effectively.

Building on the key principles of *No Child Left Behind*, we want to reshape the Federal investment to help States and communities strengthen the academic performance and postsecondary and workforce preparation of high school students, build a stronger bridge between high school and further learning, support high-quality technical education in community and technical colleges, and provide more effective, research-based reading, math, and English literacy instruction to adults. We need a fresh approach because our programs, as they are now configured, will not spur the rapid innovation in practice we need if we want to equip all of our people with the skills demanded by our 21st century economy.

A generation ago, you could fare well in the workforce with a basic education and a good work ethic. This is no longer true. The economy has changed. Today, to earn a good living, to support a family, you need a rigorous education in core academics and some training or

education beyond high school. Yet our educational system has not kept pace. We still are preparing too many youth with the basic education that is more appropriate for yesterday's jobs. Two-thirds of our 12th graders are not proficient in reading, and more than 80 percent are not proficient in math. The Urban Institute recently estimated that the national, on-time high school graduation rate is 68 percent, and about 50 percent for African-American, Hispanic, and American Indian youth. Many students make an attempt at college, but nearly one-third of our postsecondary students start out in remedial courses, and about one-third never earn a credential.

Throughout the 20th century, our commitment to education gave us a competitive edge. The United States led the world in expanding access to education, beginning first by providing a secondary education to all young people, and then by opening the doors to postsecondary education to the majority, and not just the elite. We only recently have noticed that our competitors have been emulating our example and are closing the gap. We may have the best-educated 55 to 64 year olds in the world, but our education edge has eroded or disappeared among younger generations. We rank number one in the world in the percentage of 55 to 64 year olds who have completed secondary and postsecondary education. Among 25 to 34 year olds, however, we rank number eight in secondary completion, and are tied with Japan at number three in postsecondary completion. The performance of our middle and high school students on international academic assessments is mediocre. However, we still lead in the world in the amount we spend per pupil at every level of our educational system.

Our proposals for secondary and technical education and adult education, along with the programs and initiatives you will hear about from my colleagues, will modernize our Nation's education and workforce development systems and help us regain our competitive edge.

Secondary and Technical Education

We have some outstanding career and technical education (CTE) programs in this country. Educators in many communities have recognized the changes unfolding in our economy and begun the difficult work of rethinking how we prepare people for occupations in many technical fields. Our problem is that we do not have enough of these innovative, high quality programs, and the Federal investment is not focused on increasing their number.

The fiscal year 2005 request includes \$1 billion to support the Administration's proposed Secondary and Technical Education program. This program would promote the development of a new generation of academically and technically rigorous career pathway programs. States would use most of their allocations to make grants to partnerships between school districts and technical schools, community and technical colleges, and registered apprenticeships to create, support, and expand career pathway programs. These programs would be available to high school students, and adults could access their postsecondary components. I want to highlight three important elements of the pathway programs we want to promote.

First, they must be coherent programs that include both the technical and the academic courses a student needs to enter and advance within an occupation. Right now we typically think of a CTE program as a sequence of CTE courses—Automobile Technology I and II, for example—and rarely specify the academic skills students will need to pursue these occupations. Yet employers are looking for workers whose minds are as agile and skilled as their hands. Students interested in the electrical trades, for example, need to know that they must have a good understanding of algebra, geometry, and some trigonometry and physics if they want to enter and advance in this field. Our proposal asks States to work with colleges and employers to define a

challenging academic core for each occupational program that will provide students with the academic skills they need to succeed in whatever future they choose.

Programs must also include a clear pathway to further learning after high school. Most of the fastest-growing occupations that pay good wages now require some additional training beyond high school. We would invest Federal funds only in programs that lead seamlessly into further education, such as a registered apprenticeship, or a postsecondary certificate, associate, or other degree program. Not every student may wish to pursue further learning immediately after high school, but we believe all programs should give students that option, as well as the support they need to make the transition. These pathway programs are not exclusively for youth, however. There should be multiple points of entry, and we know adults benefit from participating in these pathways at the postsecondary level. We also believe that the development of these pathways will be able to be utilized by and connected to the Community-Based Job Training grants the President has proposed in his budget request for the Department of Labor.

Finally, the President's proposal would target funds to programs that prepare students for in-demand occupations that pay family-supporting wages. A survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2001 found that relatively few high schools offer CTE programs that prepare young people for high-growth occupations with above median earnings, such as medical technician (available in 4 percent of high schools), computer graphic designer (13 percent), and electronics technician (14 percent). We want to invest Federal funds in creating more opportunities for youth and adults to acquire the skills they need to secure 21st Century jobs that pay good wages. Business skills and entrepreneurship also should be an integral component of the pathways. Our citizens should not only hold jobs; they should create jobs.

The President's 2005 budget does not request funds for most current vocational education programs, including Occupational and Employment Information, Tech-Prep State Grants, and the Tech-Prep Demonstration because these programs duplicate activities that can be achieved in the larger State grant program we are proposing. No funding is requested for the Smaller Learning Communities and Community Technology Centers programs because they duplicate activities that can be supported by other Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs. Also, funding for the Tribally Controlled Postsecondary Vocational and Technical Institutions program is requested in the Higher Education account because the Administration plans to propose that the program be reauthorized under the Higher Education Act with similar institutional development programs.

State Scholars

As part of the President's Jobs for the 21st Century Initiative, our request includes \$12 million to expand the State Scholars program to encourage more youth to pursue a more rigorous course of study in high school. Too many young people do not enroll in challenging academic courses in high school because they do not understand how critical the academic foundation they provide is to preparing them for the future. Rigorous academics are important not only for students who plan to enroll in postsecondary education, but also for students who plan to enter the workforce after graduation. Research conducted by the American Diploma Project found that the math, reading, and writing skills employers expected of their entry-level workers were comparable to the skills that postsecondary educators expected of incoming freshmen. High school coursework also affects future earnings. A National Center for Education Statistics analysis of data collected by the High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study found that students who completed rigorous academic courses in high school enjoy, on

average, a 13 percent earnings advantage nine years after graduation, regardless of whether they attended college. Low-income and minority youth, as well as first-generation college students, who complete a rigorous course of study are more likely to pursue postsecondary education and to persist to graduation. Individuals who have earned a postsecondary credential are significantly less likely to be unemployed.

Led by partnerships between business leaders and educators, State Scholars programs bring employers into the classroom to explain the academic skills students need to secure good-paying jobs, and offer incentives, support, and recognition to students who challenge themselves and take more rigorous academic courses. There are now State Scholars programs in 14 States: Arkansas, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington. The longest-running programs have been remarkably successful in encouraging youth to meet higher expectations. For example, between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of Arkansas high school graduates who completed Algebra II rose from 48 percent to 71 percent. Impressed by the program's success, business leaders, educators, and policy-makers in other States are now looking at how they can develop State Scholars programs of their own. We want to provide them with the seed capital they need to get started.

Adult Education and Family Literacy

The 2005 request includes \$574 million for adult education formula grants to States. Funding for this program has increased 28 percent since fiscal year 2000.

No Child Left Behind and our secondary and technical education proposal will ensure that, over time, students graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education and the workforce. But today, many adults who already

have been left behind are looking for a second chance. Some departed school before graduating, some graduated lacking basic skills, and some are recent immigrants with limited English literacy skills. They are looking for help in improving their skills at thousands of adult education programs across our Nation. These adults often make great sacrifices, taking time away from family or work, to learn. The reauthorization strategy the Administration put forward last year seeks to ensure that both the hours these adults invest in education and the Federal dollars we invest in the program are used most effectively.

The States and the Department have built a sound accountability system to measure learning gains and other outcomes achieved by adult education participants. Performance also has modestly improved, but it remains unacceptably low. Our reauthorization proposal sets higher expectations for State performance and insists on greater State and local accountability for results. We would offer incentives for success to States and local programs, but we would also create more explicit consequences for those that fail to perform, including technical assistance and sanctions.

To assist States in meeting more ambitious performance goals, the proposal promotes the development of State standards and curriculum frameworks to help instructors be more effective in the classroom. Research-based practice is another tool for improving the quality and productivity of adult education. With national activity funds, we are supporting rigorous research on the most effective methods for teaching reading skills to low-literate adolescents and adults. From this and other scientifically based research, we will identify effective instructional practices and help States support professional development and other strategies to ensure that this knowledge is shared with instructors and used in their classrooms.

We also want to create more choices for adults who want to improve their literacy skills. Our proposal would expand the number of workplace literacy programs, improve the capacity of community- and faith-based organizations to provide adult education, and promote greater use of technology to deliver instruction. The Administration's reauthorization proposal for Title I of the Workforce Investment Act would also make it easier for adult education participants to access job placement, employment training, and other services available through One-Stop Career Centers.

The request also includes \$6.7 million for the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). NIFL synthesizes and disseminates rigorous research on reading for children, youth and adults and mathematics and English acquisition for adults.

Conclusion

Earlier this year, the chief executive officers of the Nation's largest information technology corporations joined together to outline their policy recommendations for promoting greater American innovation, productivity, and job growth over the next decade. In *Choose to Compete*, they expressed great optimism about our economic future and our ability to "compete and win" in a global economy. They stated flatly, however, that "the U.S. public education system remains the nation's biggest competitive disadvantage" and warned that "tomorrow's good jobs are up for grabs" in the global economy. Building on the key principles of *No Child Left Behind*, the President's proposals for secondary and technical education and adult education will help States and communities regain our competitive edge, prepare our people for tomorrow's jobs, and enhance our prosperity.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Biographical Sketch

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POSITION : Counselor to the Secretary
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EXPERIENCE :

2004 - Present	Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education U.S. Department of Education
2001 - Present	Counselor to the Secretary of Education U.S. Department of Education
1996 – 2001	Chief of Staff for Educational Services, Houston Independent School District, Houston, Texas
1987 – 1996	Various administrative positions in the Houston Independent School District, Houston, Texas
1984 – 1987	Graduate Student, Cooperative Superintendency Program, University of Texas at Austin
1975 - 1984	Various administrative and teaching positions in the Houston Independent School District, Houston, Texas

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